

## City develops equitable approach to finance integrated solid waste management program

The City of Lincoln has historically financed its integrated solid waste management program through landfill tipping fees. The City has developed a more equitable approach to finance these services in which all refuse haulers assist in providing funds for these programs. An occupation tax on all refuse haulers in the City to support community solid waste services was approved by the City Council. It is scheduled to take effect June 1, 2003. Below is a set of questions and answers associated with the occupation tax.



### *“Trash Talk”*

Welcome to the first issue of the WasteLinc. This newsletter is an attempt to keep solid waste industry professionals, customers, businesses and residents, better informed about solid waste management in Lincoln. WasteLinc will be distributed at various times throughout the year and highlight programs and policies within Solid Waste Operations. Questions, comments or topic ideas for future issues can be directed to: Gene Hanlon, Recycling Coordinator, 441-7043; e-mail: [ghanlon@ci.lincoln.ne.us](mailto:ghanlon@ci.lincoln.ne.us).

## Discussing the Occupation Tax . . . .

### *What is the occupation tax?*

Any refuse hauler in the City of Lincoln will pay an occupation tax of \$7 per ton on all waste collected in the City and any waste collected in the County and transported to the Bluff Road Landfill. The occupation tax will be used to offset all or a portion of the cost for integrated solid waste management services provided by the City. This includes programs such as yard waste composting, the small vehicle transfer station, recycling, household hazardous waste collection, special waste permitting, pollution prevention technical assistance, illegal dump clean-up, old landfill closure and other non-disposal services.

### *Will homeowners see an increase in their waste collection fees as a result of the occupation tax?*

Residents should not pay more in their monthly garbage bills as a result of the occupation tax. Currently, refuse haulers pay the City a total of \$17 per ton to

dispose of the waste in the Bluff Road Landfill. The total system fee will remain at \$17 per ton. The occupation tax will be \$7 per ton while the landfill tipping fee will drop to \$10 per ton. The landfill tipping fee will cover the costs associated with disposal of waste in the Bluff Road Landfill.

### *Will other fees be changed as part of the occupation tax ordinance?*

No. All other fees will remain the same. Fees for the yard waste composting facility, transfer station, construction and demolition debris disposal area, as well as fees for appliances and tires will not change.

### *Where will the funds from the occupation tax and landfill tipping fees be used?*

The \$10 landfill tipping fee will only fund disposal operations and construction of the Bluff Road Landfill. The \$7 per ton occupation tax will fund community

## Continued Discussion on Occupation Tax

services related to Lincoln and Lancaster County's integrated solid waste management plan. These services include, but are not limited to, the yard waste composting program, the small vehicle transfer station, recycling, household hazardous waste collection program, special waste permitting program, pollution prevention technical assistance, illegal dumping clean-up, solid waste nuisance complaints and the closure of the North 48<sup>th</sup> Street Landfill.

**The Occupation Tax will fund services related to the Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan.**

### ***How will the occupation tax be enforced?***

The occupation tax relies on the self-reporting of refuse haulers on where the waste is generated. The ordinance allows the City to review a firm's records. In the event that a firm does not pay the occupation tax, its license to collect refuse in the City of Lincoln could be revoked.

### ***Will businesses be required to pay the occupation tax?***

Yes. Any person or business engaged in the business of collecting, hauling or conveying refuse, or who, as part of the duties of such person's occupation, collects, hauls, or conveys refuse will be required to pay the occupation tax.

### ***What if a hauler takes refuse to another landfill?***

A hauler taking refuse from the City of Lincoln to another landfill outside the County must first determine the amount of the occupation tax to be paid to the City by having their vehicles weighed at either of the two scales located at the Bluff Road Landfill or the North 48<sup>th</sup> Street

Landfill. The City will also provide a third scale location at Shoemaker's Truck Stop. This alternate scale will only be available for refuse haulers having an active charge account with the City and who maintain updated tare weights for their refuse hauling vehicles.

***As a homeowner hauling my own refuse to the Bluff Road landfill, will I be charged the occupation tax?***

No, individuals hauling refuse from their own residence will not pay the occupation tax. Persons must provide their name, address and

phone number of their residence from which the refuse is being hauled from and loads may be inspected to ensure compliance.

### ***Will an occupation tax apply to loads taken to the transfer station?***

No, the transfer station is operated for the convenience and safety of customers hauling refuse in small vehicles. On occasion, larger vehicles normally using the Bluff Road Landfill are routed to the transfer station during inclement weather. These vehicles will be charged the occupation tax just as if they were using the landfill.

***If you have questions related to the ordinance, contact Steve Owen, Solid Waste Operations, 441-7867.***



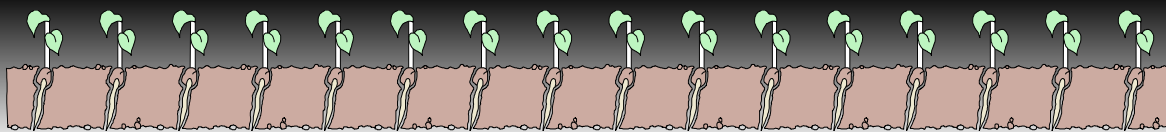
## What is "Solid Waste Operations"?

The Lincoln Solid Waste Operations (SWO) Section is in the Wastewater and Solid Waste Operations Division of the Public Works and Utilities Department. We serve Lincoln and Lancaster County residents. Solid Waste Operations provides a full range of integrated solid waste management services ranging from source reduction to recycling and disposal. The mission statement for SWO states: "Solid Waste Operations is committed to providing responsible management of all solid waste generated within its service area for the protection of health, safety and welfare of the public and environment in a cost-effective manner and in compliance with its solid waste management plan."

The following values guide the mission statement of Solid Waste Operations:

- ◆ Delivering all integrated solid waste management services provided to residents in a cost effective manner
- ◆ Environmental awareness and protection
- ◆ Maintaining a safe work environment
- ◆ Providing superior customer service
- ◆ Commitment to excellence in all aspects of operations

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## Officials Discourage Use of Herbicide on Lawns

The discovery of trace amounts of an herbicide in LinGro compost has prompted officials to recommend that property owners use alternative products to kill broad leaf weeds in their turf. LinGro is organic compost produced by the City's Public Works and Utilities Department from grass clippings, leaves and wood chips. The source of the herbicide clopyralid (pronounced clo-PEER-uh-lid) is believed to be clippings from residential lawns that have had the chemical applied to them.

"The clopyralid levels found in Lincoln's compost are not known to present health risks to people or animals," said Scott Holmes, Environmental Health Division Manager for the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department.

In the last two years, clopyralid has been discovered in compost operations in several states. Gene Hanlon, Recycling Coordinator for the City of Lincoln, said a survey of lawn companies last year indicated that the herbicide was being used locally to kill broadleaf weeds such as dandelions, clover and thistle. The City tested LinGro samples and found levels of clopyralid ranging from 13 parts per billion (ppb) to 23 ppb. Levels of clopyralid of 10 (ppb) or less can damage some plants.

Plants that can be harmed by clopyralid include:

- legumes (peas, beans, lentils, clover)
- solanaceous (tomatoes, potatoes, peppers)
- composites (asters, sunflowers, daisies, petunias)
- other sensitive plants (carrots, lettuce, lupine)

"Research indicates that at the levels of herbicide found in Lincoln's compost, it is unlikely damage will occur to sensitive plants if the compost is properly applied and mixed thoroughly with the soil," said Brady Kappler, Weed Science Educator with the University of Nebraska. "Application of one inch of LinGro compost, mixed thoroughly with six inches of soil will typically have a net benefit to garden plants."

The City is working with weed scientists from the University of Nebraska Agronomy and Horticulture Department to further evaluate the effects of clopyralid on

garden plants. The City will also work with other compost facilities in the state and the Nebraska Department of Agriculture to determine if restrictions should be placed on the use of clopyralid-containing products on residential and commercial turf that will have clippings taken to compost facilities.



Officials are asking businesses and residents to become aware of the type of weed killer they are putting on their lawns. If it contains clopyralid, they are encouraged to investigate using alternative products. Hanlon also encouraged residents who continue to use clopyralid-containing products on their lawns to not send the grass clippings to the compost facility. Instead residents can mulch their grass clippings. He added that mulching grass clippings will reduce mowing time, reduce disposal costs,

return valuable nutrients to the soil and aid the City in reducing the amount of clopyralid in its compost.

A limited quantity of the LinGro compost is available on a first-come, first-served basis at the North 48<sup>th</sup> Street Transfer Station at no cost. Individuals must load the material themselves. A number of area retailers are making LinGro compost available to the public in bulk quantities for a nominal fee. Residents can obtain the list of participating retailers by calling the Recycling Hotline at 441-8215. Individuals with pick-ups and trailers can also obtain compost from the Bluff Road Composting facility on Wednesday and Friday afternoons from 1 until 4:15 p.m. There is a fee of \$6 per cubic yard which includes loading of the material.

The North 48<sup>th</sup> Street Transfer Station also has wood chips available for a fee and will load pick-up trucks for those obtaining the landscape mulch.

Those with questions on compost use can contact the Recycling Hotline, the City's website ([www.ci.lincoln.ne.us](http://www.ci.lincoln.ne.us)) or the Lancaster County Cooperative Extension Office at 441-7180.



## Alternative Daily Cover (ADC)

Landfill customers may have noticed large tarps covering portions of the landfill lately. This is the City's latest effort to save landfill space and costs by using mechanically deployed tarps instead of covering wastes with soil each day. Daily cover is required by state regulation; however, soil use in a landfill takes up valuable landfill space, and using ADC saves money. The economics of reusable covers such as tarps is extraordinary. By using a Tarpomatic, which deploys large tarps for covering waste, the City estimates an annual cost savings of more than \$600,000 in equivalent landfill volume. This doesn't even include the cost savings associated with reduced soil hauling using large earthmoving equipment.



## Severe Weather

When severe weather occurs at the landfill, customers should be aware of ways to protect themselves and their employees. Several shelters are available at the landfill for severe weather and during tornado warnings. When lightning is present in the area, customers should stay in their vehicles until the storm passes. The National Lightning Safety Institute is a good resource for tips on lightning protection for outside workers. Be aware that operations at the landfill may be temporarily suspended during severe weather events to better protect employees and customers. During these times, haulers may not be allowed to access



the landfill area and will be advised to seek appropriate shelter and wait out the storm.

If you have questions regarding severe weather procedures at the landfill, please contact Lincoln Solid Waste Operations at 441-8102.

## Properly Tarp Your Vehicles

You only have to travel a short distance to observe litter along any roadway in Lincoln and Lancaster County. The increasing use of plastic films and bags for consumer purposes and reckless litterbugs have contributed dramatically to the amount of litter in our community. Vehicles traveling to the landfill can also lose litter and debris if not properly secured and tarped.

The City spends significant dollars providing daily litter collection along roadways leading to the landfill and reminds customers to properly secure and tarp loads. Not only can haulers be fined for littering, there is also significant liability involved if waste materials are lost off of a truck and it causes property damage or



*A properly covered and secured load*

personal injury to other motorists. Open top loads and containers should have tarps tied down securely along the front, rear and sides of the load. Even vehicles with automatic tarps need to be further secured along the sides of the container to ensure a tight fit and prevent blowing litter.

## Recycling Drop-off Site added to North 48<sup>th</sup> Street Transfer Station

The City has opened a new recycling drop-off site at 5101 North 48 Street. It will be open daily from 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. This creates a one-stop center to handle resident's solid waste disposal and recycling needs.

## Solid Waste Operations

Solid Waste Operations employs 29 people. Of these, 27 are in the disposal operations. They operate the construction and demolition (C&D) debris landfill, the small vehicle transfer station, the composting facility and the Bluff Road Landfill. The remaining two

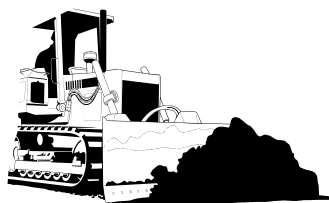


employees are employed by the recycling office which is responsible for the City's recycling drop-off program and public education activities.

Solid Waste Operations also funds selected programs in the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department related to solid waste management programs. These include the special waste permit program for businesses, the household hazardous waste collection program and illegal dumping clean-up.

## Annual Figures Show Decline

As shown in the table at the right, the amount of municipal solid waste (MSW) disposed in the Bluff Road Landfill has dropped by 8.5% over a three-year period. SWO estimates that roughly 10 % of waste generated in the County is being disposed of elsewhere.



Annual Summary of Material Received For Solid Waste Operations				
	Tons Received			
	FY '99 -'00	FY '00 -'01	FY '01 -'02	% Change
Refuse	268,539	259,561	243,655	-9.3%
Special Waste	12,204	11,617	12,863	5.4%
Transfer Station	8,799	7,173	8,509	-3.3%
MSW Disposed in Landfill	289,542	278,351	265,027	-8.5%
C & D Waste	86,760	61,305	88,227	1.7%
Compost	13,472	14,639	13,178	-2.2%
Wood Chips	5,947	5,225	4,999	-15.9%
Biosolids	24,360	24,225	31,774	30.4%
Recycling Drop-off Sites	6,352	6,187	6,042	-4.9%

The amount of compost and wood chips has also declined over the past two fiscal years. The decline in the amount of grass and leaves can be attributed to drought conditions and watering restrictions placed on residents during the summer. The amount of brush received and recycled into wood chips has declined steadily since the October 1997 snowstorm.

There has been a 5% drop in the amount of material deposited at the recycling drop-off sites over the last three years. One factor in this decline is the effort of the *Lincoln Journal Star* to become more efficient. Its new printing press and smaller format have reduced the amount of newspaper, which makes up more than half of the material recycled at the drop-off sites.

Other factors may be reduced awareness and busy schedules. The poor economy may also be a factor because less direct mail advertising and reduced consumer spending reduces the amount of junk mail and packaging recycled.

The City experienced increases in the amount of special waste, construction and demolition (C&D) waste and biosolids. The significant increase in the amount of biosolids managed by SWO was due to the fact that a significant portion of the wastewater flow to the Northeast Treatment Plant was diverted to the Theresa Street Treatment Plant due to a series of construction projects at the Northeast Treatment Plant.



# Solid Waste Contacts

**Ammunition and Explosives**

Bureau of Fire Prevention.....441-7791

**Business Assistance**

Lincoln-Lancaster County

Health Department.....441-8021

WasteCap of Lincoln .....472-0888

**Clean Up Illegal Dump Sites**

Lincoln-Lancaster County

Health Department.....441-8022

**Hazardous Waste**

Lincoln-Lancaster County

Health Department.....441-8021

Nebraska Department of

Environmental Quality.....471-8308

**Illegal Dumping of Waste (in progress):**

Lincoln Police Department .....441-7204

Lancaster County Sheriff.....441-6500

**LinGro Compost**

Solid Waste Operations .....441-8102

Recycling Coordinator.....441-7043

**Litter Prevention**

Keep Lincoln and

Lancaster County Beautiful .....441-8035

**Pollution Prevention**

Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department..... 441-8021

**Recycling**

Lincoln Solid Waste Management Association..... 475-3876

Midland Recycling..... 476-8502

Nebraska State Recycling Association.....(800)248-7328

Recycling Enterprises ..... 421-6655

Recycling Office Hot Line ..... 441-8215

Roberts Recycling..... 483-2477

WasteCap of Lincoln ..... 472-0888

**Special Waste Permit Program**

Lincoln-Lancaster County

Health Department ..... 441-8021

Solid Waste Operations..... 441-7697

**Waste Collection**

Lincoln Solid Waste

Management Association ..... 475-3876

**Wood Chips**

Solid Waste Operations..... 441-8102

Recycling Coordinator ..... 441-7043

**Yard Waste Alternatives**

Cooperative Extension ..... 441-7180

Recycling Office Hot Line ..... 441-8215

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